



NOAA FISHERIES

Alaska Region

Alaska Subsistence Halibut Program Frequently Asked Questions

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Subsistence halibut is halibut caught by an eligible rural resident or a member of an eligible Alaska Native tribe for direct personal or family consumption as food, sharing for personal or family consumption as food, or customary trade. Before fishing under the subsistence halibut regulations, fishermen must obtain a Subsistence Halibut Registration Certificate (SHARC). Special permits for community harvest, ceremonial, and educational purposes are also available to qualified Alaska communities and Alaska Native Tribes. Permit holders must comply with SHARC registration and reporting processes

This is a summary of regulations governing the Subsistence Halibut fishery and is not the complete list of limitations and prohibitions specific to this program. See 50 CFR 300.2, 300.4, 300.60, 300.61, 300.65, and 300.66 and annual management measures published annually in the Federal Register, pursuant to 50 CFR 300.62 for actual regulatory requirements. If you are required to comply with the regulations, you should consult and rely on the actual regulatory text. We cite the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) throughout this document, and provide citations for specific regulations for your reference. These regulations are available online at the electronic CFR (eCFR) [Web site](#),¹ which is updated more frequently.

The regulations in the CFR take precedence if a discrepancy occurs between them and the information in this guide or the version on the Alaska Region Web site.

For more information about fishing for subsistence halibut, visit the NMFS [Web page](#) at <https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/subsistence-halibut>, the [eCFR](#) at www.ecfr.gov, or contact the NMFS Restricted Access Management Program in-state at (907)586-7474 or 586-7202 (option #2) or out-of-state at (800)304-4846 (option #2); or by [Web form](#) at <https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/ramcomment>.

¹ Electronic Code of Federal Regulations: <http://www.ecfr.gov/>

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Table 1. Subsistence halibut gear limits by regulatory area and permit type (50 CFR 300.65(h)(1)(i)).

Regulatory Area	Permit Type	Gear Restrictions
2C--Except Sitka Sound, and Ketchikan and Juneau non-subsistence marine waters areas	SHARC	30 hooks per vessel
	Ceremonial	30 hooks per vessel
	Educational	30 hooks per vessel
	Community Harvest	30 hooks per person onboard up to 90 hooks per vessel
2C--Sitka Sound	SHARC	September 1 through May 31: 30 hooks per vessel
		June 1 through August 31: 15 hooks per vessel; no power hauling
	Ceremonial	September 1 through May 31: 30 hooks per vessel
		June 1 through August 31: fishing under Ceremonial Permit not allowed
	Educational	30 hooks per vessel
	Community Harvest	fishing under Community Harvest Permit not allowed
2C--Ketchikan and Juneau non-subsistence marine waters areas	SHARC	general subsistence halibut fishing not allowed
	Ceremonial	30 hooks per vessel
	Educational	30 hooks per vessel
	Community Harvest	fishing under Community Harvest Permit not allowed
3A--Except Chiniak Bay, and Anchorage- Matsu-Kenai and Valdez non-subsistence marine waters areas	SHARC	30 hooks per person onboard up to 90 hooks per vessel
	Ceremonial	
	Educational	
	Community Harvest	
3A--Chiniak Bay	SHARC	30 hooks per person onboard up to 60 hooks per vessel
	Ceremonial	
	Educational	
	Community Harvest	
3A--Anchorage-Matsu-Kenai and Valdez non- subsistence marine waters areas	SHARC	general subsistence halibut fishing not allowed
	Ceremonial	30 hooks per person onboard up to 90 hooks per vessel
	Educational	30 hooks per person onboard up to 90 hooks per vessel
	Community Harvest	fishing under Community Harvest Permit not allowed
3B	SHARC	30 hooks per person onboard up to 90 hooks per vessel
4A and 4B	SHARC	30 hooks per person onboard up to 90 hooks per vessel
4C, 4D, and 4E	SHARC	no hook limit

Table 2. Subsistence halibut harvest limits by regulatory area and permit type (50 CFR 300.65(h)(2)).

Regulatory Area	Permit Type	Gear Restrictions
2C--Except Sitka Sound, and Ketchikan and Juneau non-subsistence marine waters areas	SHARC	20 halibut per day per vessel and in possession
	Ceremonial	25 halibut per permit
	Educational	25 halibut per permit
	Community Harvest	no daily or possession limit
2C--Sitka Sound	SHARC	September 1 through May 31: 10 halibut per day per vessel and in possession
		June 1 through August 31: 5 halibut per day per vessel and in possession
	Ceremonial	September 1 through May 31: 25 halibut per permit
		June 1 through August 31: fishing under Ceremonial Permit not allowed
	Educational	25 halibut per permit
	Community Harvest	fishing under Community Harvest Permit not allowed
2C--Ketchikan and Juneau non-subsistence marine waters areas	SHARC	general subsistence halibut fishing not allowed
	Ceremonial	25 halibut per permit
	Educational	25 halibut per permit
	Community Harvest	fishing under Community Harvest Permit not allowed
3A-- Including Chiniak Bay, but excluding Anchorage-Matsu-Kenai and Valdez non-subsistence marine waters areas	SHARC	20 halibut per person per day and in possession
	Ceremonial	25 halibut per permit
	Educational	25 halibut per permit
	Community Harvest	no daily or possession limit
3A--Anchorage-Matsu-Kenai and Valdez non-subsistence marine waters areas	SHARC	general subsistence halibut fishing not allowed
	Ceremonial	25 halibut per permit
	Educational	25 halibut per permit
	Community Harvest	fishing under Community Harvest Permit not allowed
3B	SHARC	20 halibut per person per day and in possession
4A and 4B	SHARC	20 halibut per person per day; no possession limit
4C, 4D, and 4E	SHARC	no daily or possession limit

Q1. What gear is allowed for subsistence halibut fishing?

Subsistence fishing is limited to setline gear and hand-held gear, including longline, handline, rod and reel, spear, jig and hand-troll gear. (See 50 CFR 300.65(h)(1)) Power troll gear is not allowed.

Q2. To what extent may I cut up my subsistence halibut while onboard the vessel?

You may not fillet, mutilate, or otherwise disfigure subsistence halibut in any manner that prevents the determination of the number of fish caught, possessed, or landed. (See 50 CFR 300.66(m)).

Q3. May I fish for subsistence halibut with more than one fishing rod?

Yes, a SHARC holder may fish any number of rods, so long as he or she does not exceed the maximum hook limit for the area in which he or she is fishing. (See 50 CFR 300.65(h)(1))

Q4. Do I have to report my subsistence halibut harvests?

NMFS strongly encourages SHARC holders to report their subsistence harvests when requested for a government survey. Past surveys of subsistence halibut harvests have been voluntary.

Q5. Do I have to keep a subsistence halibut fishing logbook?

No, unless you are fishing under a Community Harvest Permit, Ceremonial Permit, or Educational Permit. But keeping a log or notebook will help you remember your fishing activities so that you can complete a voluntary survey report more accurately if requested.

Q6. May I keep other fish species that I catch while I'm subsistence fishing for halibut?

It depends. The State of Alaska manages subsistence fishing for all other fish species. For more information regarding state regulations, contact the nearest ADF&G office.

Q7. Do the buoys on both ends of my subsistence halibut setline gear need to be marked?

Yes, all setline gear marker buoys carried on board or used by any vessel for subsistence halibut fishing must be marked with the following information: first initial, last name, and address (street, city, and state), followed by the letter "S" to indicate that it is used to harvest subsistence halibut. Markings on setline marker buoys must be in characters at least 4 inches (10.16 cm) in height and 0.5 inch (1.27 cm) in width in a contrasting color visible above the water line and must be maintained so the markings are clearly visible." (See 50 CFR 300.65(h)(1)(ii) and (iii))

Q8. May I keep subsistence halibut while commercially trolling for salmon?

Yes, if you are a commercial salmon troller you may fish for subsistence halibut while salmon trolling; however, you may not use power troll gear to fish for subsistence halibut (see Q1 about allowable gear for subsistence harvest of halibut). In addition, you must meet all of the following conditions:

- You do not have any commercial- or sport-caught halibut on board;
- You have a SHARC and are fishing for halibut in subsistence waters;
- You are not fishing more than 30 hooks, except in Sitka Sound (see answer to question 30); and
- You do not have halibut Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) in the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) regulatory area in which you are fishing.

If you are commercially trolling for salmon and you have halibut IFQ, you must retain, land, and report any legal sized halibut that is caught as IFQ halibut if you meet all of the following conditions:

- You have halibut IFQ in the IPHC regulatory area in which you are fishing; and
- You have halibut IFQ for the vessel category from which you are fishing.

You may not retain commercial- or sport-caught halibut and subsistence halibut on a vessel at the same time. Any harvested halibut that is over 32" must be retained and reported as IFQ halibut if anyone on board the vessel has any unused IFQ for halibut for the area that the vessel is fishing in, and for the vessel category that the vessel belongs to. Any harvested halibut that is retained as required by the IFQ regulations (see 50 CFR 679) would prevent you from retaining any halibut for subsistence use (except as described in Q11).

Q9. How does the subsistence halibut program affect commercial and sport fishing for halibut?

Commercial, sport, and subsistence are three separate fisheries for halibut that are governed by separate regulations. Commercial halibut fishermen must comply with IFQ or CDQ Program regulations (see 50 CFR 679), and sport halibut fishermen must comply with State and Federal sport fishing regulations. It is generally prohibited to fish for subsistence halibut while commercial or sport fishing for halibut from the same vessel on the same calendar day, or possess on board a vessel, halibut harvested while subsistence fishing with halibut harvested while commercial or sport fishing (50 CFR 300.66(h)). Limited exceptions to this prohibition are described in Q11.

Q10. May I subsistence fish for halibut from a boat registered as a charter vessel?

It depends. You may not hire someone to take you subsistence fishing for halibut. A charter vessel may not be used for subsistence halibut fishing while charter vessel anglers are on board the vessel. However, the owner of a vessel that is registered with the State of Alaska as a charter vessel may use that vessel to harvest subsistence halibut provided the owner has a valid SHARC. Only the vessel owner and members of the vessel owner's immediate family may be on board the vessel while subsistence halibut fishing. Only the vessel owner and members of the vessel owner's immediate family who hold a valid SHARC may fish for subsistence halibut from the charter vessel. (50 CFR 300.66(j))

Q11. May I subsistence fish for halibut while commercial halibut is onboard?

In general, you may not have subsistence halibut and commercial halibut onboard the same vessel at the same time. However, there are exceptions if you have a SHARC and land your annual halibut harvest in Areas 4C, 4D, or 4E. In Areas 4CDE, you may retain legal-sized entire subsistence halibut along with CDQ halibut. In Areas 4D and 4E, you may retain sub-legal halibut along with CDQ halibut (50 CFR 300.66(h)).

The subsistence regulations do not prohibit having subsistence caught fish on a vessel with other (non-halibut) commercially caught fish. However, the commercially caught fish must have been harvested in compliance with the pertinent State or Federal regulations; and, in some instances, the State commercial fishing regulations may preclude commercial and subsistence fishing on the same trip or with the same gear.

Q12. May more than one SHARC holder fish for halibut from a single fishing vessel?

Yes. There is no limit to the number of SHARC holders who may fish from a single vessel. However, the SHARC holders on board the vessel must abide by the gear and harvest restrictions for the area in which they are fishing (see Tables 1 and 2)

Q13. May subsistence halibut be shared with anyone who is not eligible to obtain a SHARC?

Subsistence halibut may not be transferred to charter vessel anglers, but you may share your subsistence halibut with anyone else provided that you do not allow subsistence halibut to be sold, bartered, or otherwise entered into commerce or solicit exchange of subsistence halibut for commercial purposes. (Also see answers to questions 14 and 15.)

Q14. Can subsistence halibut be sold?

No. You must not retain or possess subsistence halibut for commercial purposes; cause subsistence halibut to be sold, bartered, or otherwise entered into commerce; or solicit exchange of subsistence halibut for commercial purposes. (50 CFR 300.66 (k))

Q15. May I be reimbursed by others for any costs I have in harvesting subsistence halibut?

Yes, but your reimbursement is limited as follows:

- If you hold a valid SHARC as a rural resident of one of the communities listed at 50 CFR 300.65(g)(1) and (g)(3), you may be reimbursed for actual expenses for ice, bait, food, and fuel directly related to subsistence fishing for halibut, by residents of the same rural community or by rural residents residing within ten statute miles of the rural location listed on your SHARC application; or
- If you hold a valid SHARC as an Alaska native tribal member listed at 50 CFR 300.65(g)(2) you may be reimbursed for actual expenses for ice, bait, food, and fuel directly related to subsistence fishing for halibut, by any Alaska Native tribe, or its members, or residents of the same rural community or by rural residents residing within ten statute miles of the rural location listed on your SHARC application.

Q16. May a person who is not eligible to obtain a SHARC fish for someone who has a SHARC but cannot go fishing? May one SHARC holder fish for another SHARC holder who cannot go fishing?

No. There is no proxy fishing for subsistence halibut. Anyone subsistence halibut fishing must have a valid SHARC in his or her own name and be present on the vessel fishing for subsistence halibut. However, a SHARC holder may give their subsistence halibut to anyone.

Q17. May a person who qualifies as a member of an Alaska Native Tribe fish for halibut in non-subsistence areas?

Ceremonial and Educational Permits may be used in non-subsistence marine areas by SHARC-holding members of 13 specific Alaska Native Tribes whose traditional fishing grounds fall within those areas. These tribes are listed in regulations at 50 CFR 300.65(k).

Q18. If I qualify for a SHARC as a member of an Alaska Native tribe but have personally moved outside the IPHC regulatory area where my tribe resides, may I subsistence fish for halibut anywhere subsistence halibut fishing is open?

It depends on whether your current residence is in a rural area or not. If you move your residence from one rural area to another rural area, then you may subsistence fish for halibut anywhere subsistence halibut fishing is open. However, if you move to a non-rural area, or if you move outside of Alaska, you must return to your IPHC regulatory area (Area 2C, 3A, etc.) of tribal membership to conduct your subsistence halibut fishing (50 CFR 300.65(h)(4)).

Q19. Is there a size limit for subsistence halibut?

No, subsistence halibut may be of any size.

Q20. What are non-subsistence waters?

These are areas closed to subsistence fishing for halibut by anyone, except as noted in question 17. In general, these are waters around Ketchikan, Juneau, Valdez, and Anchorage (50 CFR 300.65(h)(3)). Please refer to location maps and boundary descriptions in the regulations for 50 CFR 300 Subpart E, Figures 2-7.

Q21. If I am a member of an eligible Alaska Native tribe, may I apply on my own behalf or do I have to have the tribe apply for me?

Either way works. If the tribe applies for you, a SHARC will be sent directly to the address the tribe has indicated on the application. Similarly, if you fill out your own application, the SHARC will be sent to the address that you wrote on your application.

Q22. Who is eligible to receive a subsistence halibut Community Harvest Permit?

An Area 2C or 3A rural community or Alaska Native tribe eligible to fish for subsistence halibut may apply for a Community Harvest Permit. The Community Harvest Permit would allow an eligible rural community or Alaska Native tribe to appoint one or more individuals from its respective community or tribe to harvest subsistence halibut from a single vessel under reduced gear and harvest restrictions. Note however that:

- NMFS will issue a Community Harvest Permit to a community in Area 2C or 3A only if the applying community is eligible, that is, listed at 50 CFR 300.65(g)(1) and no Alaska Native tribe exists in that community.
- NMFS will issue a Community Harvest Permit to an Alaska Native Tribe in Area 2C or 3A only if the applying tribe is listed as eligible in Area 2C or 3A under 50 CFR 300.65(g)(2).

Q23. How much gear is allowed when fishing under a Community Harvest Permit?

See Table 1.

Q24. How many halibut may be retained under a Community Harvest Permit?

There is no retention limit when fishing under a Community Harvest Permit (See Table 2).

Q25. Who can obtain a Ceremonial Permit or Educational Permit?

An Area 2C or Area 3A Alaska Native tribe that is listed at 50 CFR 300.65(g)(2) may apply for a Ceremonial or Educational Permit, allowing the tribe to harvest up to 25 halibut per permit issued.

Q26. How much gear is allowed when fishing under a Ceremonial Permit or Educational Permit?

See Table 1.

Q27. How many halibut may be retained under a Ceremonial Permit or Educational Permit?

Each valid Ceremonial Permit or Educational Permit authorizes harvest of a total of 25 halibut. Only 25 fish may be harvested under each permit, regardless of how many SHARC holders participate in fishing under the permit or the number of days over which fishing occurs using the permit. For instance, a skiff from Hoonah with three SHARC holders on board that also has a Ceremonial Permit on board may retain a total of 25 halibut under that permit, not 25 halibut per person on board the vessel. For more information, see Table 2.

Q28. Who may serve as a Ceremonial Permit Coordinator or Community Harvest Permit Coordinator?

Any member of the tribe or community in possession of the permit may serve as the permit coordinator. There may be only one coordinator per tribe or community, but the same person may serve as permit coordinator for permits in the possession of the tribe or community. The permit applicant must name the Permit Coordinator as part of the application.

Q29. Do I need a SHARC to fish under a Community Harvest Permit, Ceremonial Permit, or Educational Permit?

Yes, except that students enrolled in an educational program may fish under an Educational Permit without a subsistence halibut registration certificate.

Q30. What happens if I do not return a Ceremonial, Educational, or Community Harvest Permit Log?

The return of all previously issued harvest logs that are due at the time of application is a prerequisite for receiving additional permits. A community or tribe that fails to return previously issued harvest logs will not receive any additional permit until all previously issued harvest logs are returned to NMFS.